

# The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, January 18. 1696.

Quest. 1.

**W**Hether Light hath any Corporeity? If it hath, why doth it so pierce the Air and even hard and Diaphanous Bodies, as we see it doth. If it has not, how is it sensible, since it often affects the Eye with offence?

Answer. That *Light* is a real Body, or which is the same, that the *Particles* which strike on the Eye in such a manner as to produce such a *Sensation* are Corporeal, is now, we think, generally held: That 'tis not a quality, an accident, or meer mortification only, seems to be pretty plain from its first Original, for it had a *Peculiar Creation*; God said let there be *Light* and there was *Light*, which looks too great for an accident, or imperfect, precarious being. But tho it be *Body*, 'tis doubtless the most refined part of *Body*, *Pure Aether*, it may be, if we know what that was, nay, the very *effluence*, and (if we might here use the word) *Spirits*, *Essence*, or *Tincture*, of *Aether*, and if *Aristotle* had made this his *Quinta Essentia*, he might have come nearer the Truth than in making it a meer accident. Now the parts of it must be supposed extremely fine, much finer than the pores of *Water* or *Air* through which it passes, which we know not else how it could do; since otherwise those substances would terminate and resist it. And 'tis the same in all other Diaphanous substances, tho of never so close a texture: The *Rays* of *Light*, the *Sun-beams* themselves, which we know are *Body*, because we can contract or dilate 'em, we are yet as sure, do pass through the *Pores* of *Glass*, unless there's something fix'd on the contrary side, to stop their Journey, in which case they are forc'd to bend back like the *Sword* when a pass is made against any hard substance, and sometimes fly in *Shivers*, as that will do, which if you please you may call *Reflection* and *Refraction*. Day can find us, as well as we see that at a little *Hole*, and it affects the *Eye* with pleasure as well as offence, unless in *Owls* and other Birds of *Night*; and we can perceive it in some measure, even through our closed *Ey-lids*, and 'tis we think unaccountable how any thing but a real self-subsisting being should make such a vivid Impression on our senses. There may perhaps be an objection made from that *Light* we fancy we see sometimes in the dark, or when we receive a blow on the *Eye*: But what if this should only be an actual striking Fire. The excitation we mean, of some real particle of *Light*, lurking in some of the *Humours* of the *Eye*, which we doubt not do contain a sort of a *Phosphor*, which is extracted by *Chymists* from a *Liquor* of the same substance with our *Tears*; as 'tis to be seen proceeding from the sweat of *Horses* and other Beasts, when strok'd in the night; and we have known it also in men; and the *Ignis Lambens* which has been seen on several person's *Heads*, we are apt to think is no other. However, we have our selves experienc'd, on intense reading, especially by *Candle-Light*, together with a heat tenderness of the *Eye*, Expression of *Water*, a mighty glazing *Light*, often returning, and remaining for sometime within the Organ, which we have sometimes fancy'd did not so much arise from an over-tension of the optic Nerve, by which some perhaps would solve it, as from some accidental Chymical preparation of nature, like that we have already mention'd.

Quest. 2. Whether Darknes be a positive being, or a meer Privation of Light?

Answer. *Aristotle* is justly blam'd, even by those who have otherwise a great and a just esteem for him, for making *Privation* a Principle, for what do we mean by a principle of any thing, but that of which 'tis

compounded, and he may almost as well make *Negation* such as *Privation*, only one is attributed to a subject incapable of receiving such or such a *Form* as *Negation* of sight to a stone, the other to a capable subject, tho either not yet induc'd into it, or after 'tis so, separated from it, as *Blindness* in one who either has formerly seen, or has a natural power of seeing, tho the *Act* it may be some-ways obstructed. Now this *Privation* is not known by the senses, by which nothing can be known but a positive and real being. But *Darkness* is not perceiv'd truly and positively, but only Negatively, as the *Intellect* collects that there is a want of *Light*, because the sight, when rightly dispos'd, can perceive nothing. We don't deny but *Privation* does oftentimes connote some real being, both in Metaphysical and Logical privation, as well as Physical: Thus evil, which is privation of Good, does yet oftentimes include some action, which must be positive, and so closely include it that we cannot but mentally separate from it, and that rather precisely, with a Metaphysical precision, than Negatively. Thus *Blindness* may have and often has something positive that causes it, and which one may almost call the very *Form* of it, as the *Gutta-Serena*, or *Drop-Serena*, as Mr. *Milton* experimentally calls it, not to add a shot, a blow, or several other accidents, because only *Transient*, and rather the cause of *blindness* than the thing it self, as indeed is the former, tho much more intimately united with it, and edging as far into the *Essence* of it as 'tis possible for a being into no Being. So in darkness, in which seems to be both a Logical and Physical privation into different senses, as it notes the absence of a future *Form*, *Light*, which will be in the *Air* as soon as day returns, 'tis Physical, as the absence of the same *Form* consider'd as past, when the *Sun* is set, 'tis rather Logical. But there has been *Darkness* something more positive than this in either of these considerations, tho that, we confess, supernatural, and, if you please, a Transcendental *Darkness*, as perhaps that was at the Death of our Saviour. And as we are ascertain'd from Scripture of that of *Egypt*, of which the Author of the Book of Wisdom, Chap. 17. v. 14. Says, "that it came upon 'em from the bottom of inevitable Hell an Image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them. Where Mr. Cowley had that noble hint in his *Plagues of Egypt*, Wherein he Fancies "that the darkness of Hell below, "which is call'd utter *Darkness* over-shadow'd the "Land; most probable it seems that 'twas some black, thick, and damp Vapour, which fill'd all the Air. But hear his own incomparable Verse, (one Line of which has more sense in't then a dozen of our New Plays faggated up together.) *Plagues of Egypt*. Stanza. 13.

From the deep baleful Caves of Hell below  
Where the old Vorber Night does grow,  
Substantial Night, that does disclaim  
Privation's empty name.

Through secret Conduits monstrous shapes arose  
Such as the Sun's whole force could not oppose;  
They with a solid Cloud  
All Heavens Eclipsed Face did shrowd;  
seem'd with large Wings spread o're the Sea and Earth

To brood up a new Chaos his deformed Birth.

Quest. 3. Does it not look suspiciously that *Moses*, at the giving of his Law to the Jews, would not suffer any of 'em to come near the Mount, but plac'd Barriers round it, and charg'd 'em on pain of Death not to touch it, or approach it, adding as a Reason;

Leaft



*Let any of the people should break through to gaze, &c.*

*Ans.* The visible and undeniable Hand of God in all those great wonders which Moses had before wrought in the sight of the Children, as well as the glorious appearance of God himself on the Mount, in such a manner as cou'd not be deceit, in the presence of so many hundreds of Thousands cou'd certainly leave no room for the least suspicion of *præfice* and *Imposition*, on the people in the foremention'd Instance. That *Holy Ground* was distinguish'd from profane in such a manner as 'twas lawful for some to approach and not for others, and even those who might, not unless in a more devout posture and temper than at other times, we see in the whole *Old Testament*, and know that it cost the men of *Bethshemesb* very dear for looking where they had nothing to do. All which was design'd to teach the *Jews* what *Purity* and *Holiness*, both of body and mind God required of them.


*Quest. 4.* I find in the 12 Chap. of Heb. the Author of it affirming that when Moses gave the Law, he said to the people 'I exceedingly fear and quake. And in another place Jannes and Jambres, are mention'd as the Magicians which resisted him. Neither of which I can discover in the Old Testament. Pray, whence was the account of these matters, and how shall I be assur'd of the Truth of 'em?


*Ans.* None can think that all the accidents which happen'd to Israel, from the time of their going into Egypt to the sealing the Prophets, and ceasing of such immediate Inspiration, were committed to writing and many considerable passages might be, and doubtless were handed down by Tradition among them; and a very learned person of our Church takes both these to be of that Nature, as well as *Enoch's* Prophecy and the dispute of *Michael* and the Devil concerning the Body of *Moses*. In the latter, that of *Jannes* and *Jambres*, this may hold, but we humbly conceive there's no need on't in the former: There being frequent mention in the *Jewish* writers of these two persons, as chief of the *Egyptian Magicians*, tho their names sometimes a little alter'd. In the *Babylonish Talmud* they are stiled *Johanne* and *Mamre*, and 'tis added that they said to *Moses* in the *Proverb*. 'Assers tu stramen in *Afrim*. Thou work'st wonders here in Egypt, which is so full of Magicians already in *Jonathans Chald.* Paraphrase, they are call'd *Janis* and *Jambres*. In the *Talmud* *Johanne* and *Membre*, In *Vit. Mosi*, *Jane* and *Membre*: In *Lib. Zochar*, *Jones* and *Jambres*, in another of their Books *Jonos* and *Jambros*, and in one of 'em *John* and *Ambrose*: They were it seems so famous that they are mention'd in Heathen Authors, *Numenius*, *Artaus*, and others. And some old writers affirm that they were both drown'd with *Pharo* in the *Red-Sea*, and a *Kenotaph*, or empty *Honorary Sepulcher*, afterwards erected for them: However, there's no doubt but there were such men, and that such were their names, otherwise they had not been recorded, the Holy Spirit of God being as infallible in the writers of the *New Testament* as he was before in them of the old.


For that of *Moses* saying, I exceedingly *Fear* and *Quake*, there is not, we think, any need of flying to the same Tradition to explain it, because if we are not extremely mistaken as much is expressed in the *Old Testament*, for we find in *Exod.* 19. 16. "'Tis said all the people that were in the Camp trembled, and again, where 'tis said in our Translation, and in the *Hebrew*, (as well as indeed in all other except the *Arabic* and that we are about to quote) at the end of v. 18. "The whole mount quaked greatly, the 70 read "the whole people quaked greatly, having it seems read [*kol Ha-am*, for *kol Ha-bar*.] And the very word

*σφοδρῶς* is used by them, which expresses [exceedingly more fully than 'tis in the Apostles writings, where 'tis only included in the words, *ἐκφοβήθη* and *ἐκταράχθη*. But still what's all this to *Moses* his saying, he did himself exceedingly fear and quake, we think a great deal, for if he writ the Book of *Exodus*, which we know no good men that doubt, and he says therein, as he does, that all the people that was in the Camp trembled; and again that all the people were afraid even to stupefaction *ἐξέστη πᾶς ὁ λαός*, and he himself was in the Camp, and one of the people, then he says we think, as fairly as can be, that he himself did fear and quake, as the Apostle affirms of him.


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
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
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
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
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
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
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